



Community Connections

Volume 9 Number 2

A Newsletter of the Talbot County Department of Social Services

Summer 2008

Talbot County DSS and Local Agencies Focus on Emergency Preparedness DSS Assumes Responsibility of Primary Agency in Talbot County Emergency Operations Plan: Emergency Support Function 6 — Mass Care/Sheltering

Hurricane season is upon us once again. Are *you* prepared? Talbot County Department of Social Services (TCDSS) is! TCDSS and other local agencies have been preparing and planning the coordination of the county's shelter plans for months and, on July 23, staff and volunteers will be put to the test during a day-long shelter exercise.

Easton High School will be the scene for this event, a culmination of the county's preparations. In addition to TCDSS, participants will include the American Red Cross, and the following Talbot County agencies:

Emergency Management Agency, Board of Education, Humane Society, Emergency Medical Services, and Health Department, as well as a number of county employee volunteers. The shelter will open its

doors at approximately 9:00 a.m. to "evacuees" who will be registered into the shelter, provided lunch, and be signed out by mid-afternoon.

While evacuation shelters are nothing new for Talbot County or TCDSS - they were utilized and TCDSS was a supporting agency during Hurricanes Gloria, Floyd, and Isabel - this year marks a couple of "firsts" in the preparation and implementation process. Previously, the American Red Cross was in charge of coordi-



Staff from TCDSS and 15 other local agencies attend "Path to Disaster Readiness Training" presented by JoAnne Knapp, MDOD Director of Emergency Preparedness Policy, and Michael Boldosser, Talbot County Emergency Planner.

nating shelters, but this year, the federal government mandated that the Department of Human Resource (DHR) take over the planning. Locally, that means TCDSS has taken the reins, with assistance from all of the agencies listed above.

Secondly, it will literally be "raining cats and dogs" as, for the first time, registered evacuees will be able to bring their pets with them. Taking lessons learned from other disasters, people now will not

have to choose between evacuating and letting their animals fend for themselves or staying in harm's way. Pets, limited to dogs and cats in carriers only, will be sheltered separately by the Humane Society. Pet owners must bring all food, medicine, shot records, and other items necessary to caring for their pets.

Whether you have a pet or not, if you live in an area subject to flooding you should be prepared to evacuate if necessary. The best thing to do is to

have a destination pre-planned, be it a relative or friend inland, a hotel, or someplace else. While residents will not be turned away from a county shelter, this should be your last resort.

At the shelter, only basic needs will be provided - a sleeping area, emergency medical services, and food. Residents are encouraged

to bring a pillow and blanket, first aid kit, medication, special dietary food, water, entertainment, toiletries, a battery-powered radio, flashlights, batteries, and special needs of infants and the elderly. "Taking responsibility to be personally prepared in case of an emergency is just as important as shelter planning," says April Sharp, Director, Talbot County DSS. "Everyone should have a plan for themselves and their families to either shelter in place or evacuate the area completely."

"Taking responsibility to be personally prepared in case of an emergency is just as important as shelter planning,"

**April Sharp
Director, TCDSS**

Are *you* prepared for an emergency?

Below is a list of agency websites that provide information on being prepared for an emergency:

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)
www.fema.gov

MDOD (MD Department of Disabilities)
www.mdod.state.md.us

MEMA (MD Emergency Management Agency)
www.mema.state.md.us

Talbot County Emergency Management Agency
www.talbotcountymd.gov

Counties on the Mid-Shore Honor Foster Parents during National Foster Care Month

Events include naming Talbot County's Foster Parent of the Year, a dinner cruise and a "Party in the Park"

For 20 years, May has been designated as National Foster Care Month, drawing attention to the important role foster care plays in helping children whose families are in crisis and unable to care for them.

Today, there are more than 10,000 foster children in Maryland, with over 135 children in care on the Mid-Shore, 36 of whom are from Talbot County. Roughly 40 percent of foster children leave their home counties for care because there are not enough local foster homes in which to place them; Talbot County is no exception.

Social Services officials statewide are committed to providing the best possible foster, adoptive and respite care for Maryland's children in need, but need the help of local communities to succeed. The message nationally for Foster Care Month this year is simple: No matter how much time you have to give, you have the power to do something positive that will "Change a Lifetime" for a young person in foster care.

The Departments of Social Services in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen

Anne's and Talbot Counties recently held an event, Party in the Park, at the Multicultural Festival in Easton to thank foster parents for their commitment to the region's children and to encourage others to consider becoming foster parents on the Mid-Shore. Brenda Donald, Secretary of the State's Department of Human Resources, attended the event, which kicked off the Mid-Shore's celebration of National Foster Care Month and a statewide tour to publicize the foster care program and highlight the urgent need for foster parents. Over 100 foster parents and children attended the event and enjoyed food, games, entertainment, live music, and face-painting. There was a live radio remote where foster parents shared their stories with listeners. The event's finale included a celebratory cake which was shared with all who attended the Multicultural Festival.

Later in the month, foster parents from the five counties were honored in a more personal setting as they "set sail" aboard the Dorothy Megan for a dinner cruise on the Choptank River, enjoying an evening of good food, good company, and a little respite from their role as foster parents. Foster parents were presented with certificates of appreciation and

each county recognized their Foster Parent of the Year. This year, Talbot County Foster Parent of the Year was awarded to Glenda Dawson.

Persons interested in becoming foster parents can call 1-888-MD-KIDS2 or TCDSS at 410-770-4848. Information sessions are scheduled on a regular basis (see Upcoming Events, page 5).




Pictured above: Talbot County Foster Parents at the dinner cruise, left to right, front row: Sharon Harding, Cheryl Krebeck, Debbie Tanzyus, Susie Warrington; back row: Cynthia Wooters, Clarence Wooters, Daniel Tanzyus, Roy Warrington.



April Sharp, Director, TCDSS (first from left), introduces DHR Secretary Brenda Donald (second from left) who spoke on behalf of foster children and foster parents at the Party in the Park at the Multi-Cultural Festival. Also pictured, continuing from left: Delegate Addie Eckardt (District 37B), Delegate Jeannie Haddaway (District 37B), Al Silverstein, President and CEO, Talbot County Chamber of Commerce, Corey Pack, Talbot County Councilman and TCDSS Board Member, and Town of Easton Mayor Robert Willey

1000 by 10



For information on how you can become a foster parent call
1-888-MD-KIDS2
(1-888-635-4372)
 because

Place Matters
Nothing matters more to a child than a place to call home

TALBOT COUNTY DSS RECEIVES REACCREDITATION

On April 18, 2008, Talbot County Department of Social Services received notification that it is in compliance with the Council on Accreditation (COA), marking the culmination of a 15-month long regional effort by the Departments of Social Services in Talbot, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties to seek reaccreditation by COA for their respective agencies.

COA is an international, independent, not-for-profit, child and family service and behavioral healthcare organization that accredits more than 1,800 private and public organizations a year. Accreditation by COA signifies that an organization has demonstrated compliance with national best-practice standards determined by professional and consumer consensus.

Talbot County first received accreditation from COA in May, 2003. "Since that time, the Department has continued to put forward best practice efforts in our programs and in the operation of the organization," stated Jackie Veeney, Assistant Director. In 2006, DHR launched a statewide initiative to obtain accreditation for all 24 local Departments of Social Services, as well as the Central Office. With the statewide initiative, Talbot had the benefit of the Central Office's support in remaining an accredited organization.

In seeking reaccreditation, the agency underwent a lengthy process beginning in January, 2007, that involved a comprehensive review and analysis of its administrative operations and service delivery against national standards of best practice. To receive accreditation, all organizations must comply with a set of 11 generic first-order organization and management standards (see sidebar), under which fall 109 detailed second-order standards and 471 de-

tailed third-order standards. Additionally, there are 38 sets of service-specific standards for child welfare, behavioral health care, and community services, each also with detailed second- and third-order standards. In October, the Department submitted its Self-Study, which outlines its compliance with COA standards, as well as reevaluation of internal processes and procedures for continuous quality improvement.

The accreditation process includes a rigorous evaluation by trained peer reviewers who determine, on a standard-by-standard basis, whether an organization is operating in accordance

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Jackie Veeney
Assistant Director

with COA's standards. In December, 2007, Talbot hosted the four-day on-site visit on behalf of the three counties during which time four peer reviewers interviewed customers, management and staff, board members and other stakeholders. They reviewed procedure manuals, board minutes, financial information, continuous quality improvement material, outcome data, case records, and personnel records to determine that Talbot County DSS meets the standards for accreditation.

One might wonder, "Why go through all this work just to be accredited?" Among other things, accreditation results in improved service delivery and overall agency capacity, enhanced internal processes and procedures, recognition from governments, foundations, and grant makers, and external validation of quality. Achieving accreditation is not the finish line; it is the basis for an ongoing, professionally sound way of doing business.

COA Accreditation Standards

G1. Ethical Practice, Rights, and Responsibilities. The organization respects the rights and dignity of the individuals, families, and groups it serves.

G2. Continuous Quality Improvement. The organization demonstrates a commitment to continuous quality improvement (CQI) through implementation of a comprehensive CQI system.

G3. Organizational Integrity. The organization promotes the public interest through sound governance and administration, in accordance with applicable legal requirements, principles of effective management, and ethical practice.

G4. Management of Human Resources. The organization ensures that human resource planning and deployment fosters efficient and effective service delivery and promotes the attainment of desired outcomes.

G5. Quality of the Service Environment. The organization provides programs and services in an environment that is safe, accessible, and appropriate for the needs of personnel and persons served.

G6. Financial Management. The organization manages its financial affairs according to sound practices and applicable statutory and professional requirements.

G7. Training and Supervision. The organization promotes competence in personnel by providing regular supervision and training on topics relevant to service delivery.

G8. Intake, Assessment, and Service Planning. Intake, assessment, and service planning processes engage persons and families in evaluating their request for service and build on identified strengths to achieve desired outcomes.

G9. Service Delivery. The organization provides coordinated and carefully monitored services.

G10. Behavior Management. The organization protects the rights of persons served in its restrictive behavior management practices and complies with the standards of this section.

G11. Administration and Risk Management. The organization conducts its administrative affairs and manages its operations prudently and effectively to meet the needs of persons served, personnel, and the organization.

Source www.coastandards.org

TCDSS Volunteer Program Makes a Difference

At Talbot County Department of Social Services (TCDSS), the Volunteer Services Program has been experiencing a summertime growth spurt. Recently, seven new volunteers were ushered into the orientation process to begin preparing them for their work. Tutoring, mentoring, scrap booking, and making friendly visits or phone calls are some of the ways they'll be offering support to Social Services staff and customers. They'll also be using state cars to fill assorted transportation needs, includ-



Above: Pat Murphy, Volunteer Coordinator, explains about volunteering at TCDSS at the Multi-Cultural Festival; Right: Volunteer Nancy Hebb "facepaints" a young participant at the Fatherhood Picnic.

ing transporting customer to medical appointments and to local summer camp programs. This alleviates some of the burden on staff time and also provides customers with one-on-one interaction, teaching, and encouragement – a unique enhancement of the services they are receiving.

Does it make a difference? One boy who had tutoring assistance did so well on his tests he's reached a new level of confidence. Another child has been meeting with a volunteer for recreation, as well as tutoring. He has experienced improvement not only in his schoolwork, but also in showing respect for others.

Who can become a TCDSS volun-

teer? Anyone with a skill or talent they'd like to share, or with the time and willingness to try something new. Following an application and interview, a full agency orientation takes place during which unit supervisors describe their services and volunteer use. Then, before an assignment is begun, a staff member covers details to assure that the volunteer is comfortable with the job. Assignments fall within the time frame of Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00p.m.

The volunteer experience is one that is rich with potential. Our volunteers have spoken of ways they have changed and grown, personally, through their work. They are sincerely valued



by the staff and periodically are recognized for their contributions.

Recently, as an expression of appreciation, volunteers were treated to a night out at the theatre. Aside from social events, they are also eligible to attend staff trainings or workshops.

While Volunteer Services is expanding, further publicity about this fine program needs to continue. "Social Services uses volunteers? Really? I didn't know that!" is still a common response heard around the county. To schedule a presentation for any size group or for more information on becoming a volunteer, please contact Pat Murphy, Volunteer Coordinator, at 410-770-4958 or pmurphy5@dhr.state.md.us.

Becky Smith Named Talbot County DSS's Social Worker of the Year



Becky Smith, LGSW (Licensed Graduate Social Worker), was awarded Social Worker of the Year for Talbot County Department of Social Services (TCDSS). Ms. Smith and social workers from other Departments throughout the state were honored for their hard work and dedication by the Department of Human Resources at a luncheon at the Belvedere Hotel in Baltimore on March 25. This year's theme – *Building on Strengths: Help Starts Here* – focused on the important strengths inherent in each individual, family and community.

Each year, social workers across the country celebrate the profession during March, National Professional Social Work Month, which the White House officially recognized in 1984. They reflect on the history of their profession, celebrate the important work that is currently being done and look toward a future of promise for the individuals, families and communities they serve.

Ms. Smith is a Foster Care Worker at TCDSS and is responsible for a full caseload of out-of-home children. She is particularly committed to those children who are working toward independent living, attending regional and national Independent Living Conferences with groups of energetic adolescents. In addition to her regular duties, Ms. Smith conducts the nine-week PRIDE Pre-Service Training for Prospective Foster and Adoptive Parents, which takes place in the evening, after Ms. Smith has already put in a full day's work.

Congratulations, Ms. Smith, and thank you, and all social workers, for everything you do every day!

Succeed at Home First

Theme for Annual Fatherhood Picnic

Succeed at Home First was the theme for the Annual Fatherhood Picnic, held June 21 at the Talbot County Agricultural Center. The event was the collaborative effort of the Fatherhood Programs from Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, and Talbot Counties.

Participants and their families enjoyed a day filled with fun, games and education, thanks to the dedicated efforts of volunteers from Chesapeake College Learning Mobile, the Governor's Well Mobile, Caroline County Public Library and Bookmobile, Talbot County Public Library, Talbot and Dorchester County Health Departments, and local county DSS staff and volunteers. Activities included family photographs, taken by Gary Rollefson, and face-painting by Nancy Hebb, both Talbot County DSS volunteers.

While the children were entertained, dads actively participated in a nurturing session, *The Bucket Theory*, facilitated by Laura Roth, Talbot County DSS Parent Education Coordinator, and co-facilitators Linda Barton, Queen Anne's County Department of

Juvenile Services, and Nancy Harrison, Talbot County Health Department, who are both also trained facilitators in the nurturing, parenting philosophy. Additionally, the adults received some words of inspiration from Talbot County Councilman, Corey Pack. Councilman Pack emphasized the key components of a healthy relationship: communication, trust, emotional security, forgiveness and love.

Each program selected a participant who was recognized as the Father of the Year, based on the steps he had taken to make a change in his children's lives, reflective of his own strength and courage, forging through barriers and moving ahead. Talbot County Father of the Year was awarded to Frederick L. Britt.

The day's festivities closed with a musical presentation from the children. They were equipped with hand-made tambourines, shakers, drums and guitars which they made at the day's event, under the direction of Ali Quillen, Music Therapist, and her volunteers.



Children at the Fatherhood Picnic, led by Ali Quillen, put on a concert for their families. The mural in the background was drawn by Talbot County Father of the Year, Fred Britt.

Save the Date

Upcoming Events

Unless otherwise specified, all events take place at TCDSS, 301 Bay Street, Unit 5, Easton

August

- Back to School Resource Fair:**
8/14/08, 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. For information contact Sharon Harrington, 410-770-5907.

September

- Foster Care Informational Meeting:**
9/2/08, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Caroline County Library, Denton. For information contact Rebecca Hutchison, 410-770-7371.
- Dependable Strengths® Training:**
9/9/08, 9/10/08 & 9/23/08, 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For information contact TCDSS, 410-770-4848, and ask about Dependable Strengths®.
- Foster Care Informational Meeting:**
9/2/08, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Caroline County Library, Denton. For information contact Rebecca Hutchison, 410-770-7371.

October

- PRIDE Pre-Service Training:** Starting 10/7/08 for 9 weeks, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., Dorchester County DSS, Cambridge. For information contact Rebecca Hutchison, 410-770-7371.
- Nurturing Parent Education Classes:** Starting 10/14/08 for 10 weeks, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. For information contact Laura Roth, 410-770-5750.

November

- Dependable Strengths® Training:**
11/18/08, 11/19/08 & 12/2/08, 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For information contact TCDSS, 410-770-4848, and ask about Dependable Strengths®.

December

- Foster Care Informational Meeting:**
12/3/08, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. For information contact Rebecca Hutchison, 410-770-7371.
- Foster Care Informational Meeting:**
12/17/08, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Dorchester County DSS, Cambridge. For information contact Rebecca Hutchison, 410-770-7371.



the missing link

Dear Missing Link:

Does Talbot County DSS offer GED classes? If not, who in Talbot does?

Ready to Earn my Diploma

Dear Ready:

GED (General Educational Development) classes are offered through Talbot County Family Support Center located at 126 Port Street, Easton. Their telephone number is 410-820-6940.

The Dorchester County Board of Education also provides adult education services, including GED, for Talbot County at the Multi-Service Community Center, Cambridge-South Dorchester High School, 2475 Cambridge Bypass, Cambridge. Their number is 410-228-1093 or 410-479-3544.



Dear Missing Link:

My son can't seem to hang on to a job and is looking for help. Can you point him in the right direction?

Concerned Mom

Dear Mom:

TCDSS offers job readiness/job placement classes (see Dependable Strengths® article at right) to prepare customers and assist them with the search for long-term employment. Also available at TCDSS is a Community Resource Room that provides customers with tools and services for job searching, resume creation, child care resources, educational classes, transportation schedules and budget preparation. The Resource Room is open to the public Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. To schedule another time or for additional information on either of these programs, contact Lyn Shockley, Job Search Coordinator, at 410-770-4496.

Another resource is Talbot County One-Stop Career Center located at 301 Bay Street, Suite 301, Easton, 410-822-3030, www.dlir.md.gov/county/talbot.

Dependable Strengths® Workshops Enhance Employability

Two years ago, TCDSS sent three staff members to participate and become trainers in a workshop based on a very simple premise: all people have some form of excellence deep within them. This can be identified and brought to awareness, enabling the person to do their best work and experience their greatest satisfaction and effectiveness in life. This simple idea evolved into a depth process for identifying this unique excellence within each individual: Dependable Strengths®.

In a planned sequence of experiences, participants identify their strengths, talents, skills and abilities - Dependable Strengths - which unlock hidden potential and puts them in touch with their "best self." Dependable Strengths® is a unique research-based process proven to increase self-esteem, motivation, and interest in learning for people of all ages.

TCDSS has conducted five Dependable Strengths® workshops since September, 2006, and three more are planned for the remainder of 2008 (see Upcoming Events, page 5). Under the guidance of TCDSS's Dependable Strengths® facilitators, Lyn Shockley, Angel Shumate, and Craig Wisner, over 50 workshop participants have learned to use their strengths to cope with sociological and personal obstacles to enhance their employability. Through reports they developed on their strengths, they learned how to create contacts, manage job interviews, negotiate pay, obtain promotions, relate well with others and participate on a supportive team. The goal of the program is to enhance a participant's existing skills and prepare them for long-term employment.

For more information or to make a referral, contact TCDSS at 410-770-4848 and ask about Dependable Strengths®.

Overview of the Dependable Strengths® Articulation Process

The following is just a taste of what is a deceptively intricate and involved process

Step 1: Remember

special events in your life called Good Experiences

Step 2: Describe

in detail your top Good Experiences and receive feedback about possible strengths

Step 3: Determine

your pattern of strengths through use of the Dependable Strengths® Exploration Chart

Step 4: Confirm

your possible Dependable Strengths® with the Reality Test

Step 5: Compile

a unique Dependable Strengths® report about your capabilities

Step 6: Use

the report on the Job Magnet system for attracting job offers

Source: www.dependablestrengths.org



Community Connections

is a publication of the Talbot County Department of Social Services
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